

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 SAIGON 15611 01 OF 02 191003Z

13

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /026 W

----- 110853

R 190900Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1227

INFO USDEL JEC PARIS

COMUSSAG NKP THAILAND

CINCPAC HONOLULU

COMIPAC HONOLULU

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 SAIGON 15611

EXDIS

SPECAT EXCLUSIVE FOR MILITARY ADDRESSEES

FOLLOWING SENT ACTION SAIGON FROM DANANG 18 DEC 74:

QUOTE

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 DANANG 0731

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, VS

SUBJECT: MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTHERN MR-1

REF: DANANG 0729

1. DEC 17 DISCUSSED MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTHERN MR-1 WITH
BG TRAN VAN NHUT, COMMANDER OF 2ND DIVISION.

2. IN QUANG TIN PROVINCE, WHICH CONSTITUTES THE NORTHERN PORTION
OF THE 2ND DIVISION'S AO, NHUT IS MOST CONCERNED WITH THE
CONTINUING THREAT TO HAU DS DISTRICT TOWN. HE HAS A PLAN WHEREBY
5,000 REFUGEES LIVING AT HAU DUC WILL BE MOVED FIRST TO TAM KY
AND THEN SOUTH OUT OF MR-1 FOR RESETTLEMENT. ACCORDING TO NHUT,
THE PEOPLE WANT TO LEAVE. THE MOVE WILL START AS SOON AS

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 SAIGON 15611 01 OF 02 191003Z

TRANSPORTATION CAN BE ARRANGED. ONCE THE 5,000 ARE MOVED

"HAU DUC WILL BE MUCH LESS INTERESTING TO THE COMMUNISTS."
(I BELIEVE THAT NHUT IS ALSO CONTEMPLATING THE NECCESITY OF
PERHAPS HAVING TO GIVE UP HAU DUC IN THE EVENT OF STRONG NVA/VC
ATTACK. THE BATTALION PROTECTING HAU DUC WOULD PROBABLY FALL
BACK TO STRENGTHEN THE DEFENSE OF TIEN PHUOC DISTRICT TOWN.)

3. IN QUANG NGAI PROVINCE, THE SOUTHERN PORTION OF THE DIVISON'S
AO, NHUT CONTINUES TO BE CONCERNED WITH THE RATHER REMOTE AND
ISOLATED DISTRICT TOWNS OF TRA BON AND SON HA WHERE THE SITUATION
HAS CERTAIN SIMILARITIES WITH HAU DUC. A RANGER BATTALION DEFENDS
EACH DISTRICT HEADQUARTERS AND WOULD BE HARD PRESSED TO DEFEND
AGAINST A DETERMINED NVA/VC ATTACK. (THE EXAMPLE OF GIA VUC
WHERE ONLY 21 MEN WERE RECOVERED FROM THE DEFENDING BATTALION
IS STILL ON PEOPLE'S MINDS, PARTICULARLY THOSE SERVING IN SON HA
AND TRA BON.)

4. ALTHOUGH NHUT IS CONCERNED ABOUT HIS REMOTE DISTRICTS HE IS
EVEN MORE CONCERNED ABOUT THE BATANGAN PENNINSULA AREA OF SOUTH-
EASTERN BINH SON DISTRICT, THE AREA TO THE SOUTH OF NGHIA HANH
DISTRICT HEADQUARTERS, AND THE SOUTHERMOST PORTION OF THE
PROVINCE AROUND DUC PHO AND MO DUC DISTRICTS. HE IS ALSO WATCHING
VERY RECENT DEVELOPMENTS TO THE WEST OF SON TINH DISTRICT. IN
MOST OF THESE AREAS THE FORCE OPPOSING THE 2ND DIVISION AND RF
ARE VIET CONG LOCAL FORCE UNITS. THESE VC UNITS, WHICH HAVE NVA
FILLERS AND SOME NVA LEADERSHIP, ARE FIGHTING WELL AND 2ND DIVISION
AND RF UNITS ARE FINDING THE FIGHTING TO BE SMALLER SCALE THAN
IN THE NORTHERN PORTION OF MR-1 BUT EVERY BIT AS DIFFICULT. RECENT
RAINS MAKES LOGISTICS A PROBLEM FOR BOTH SIDES.

5. IN EASTERN BINH SON DISTRICT THE 2ND DIVISION IS ATTEMPTING
TO CLEAR VC LOCAL FORCE UNITS OUT OF THE BATANGAN PENINSULA.
RECENT RAINS HAVE SWOLLEN CREEKS AND FLOODED RICE PADDIES
MAKING FOR VERY SLOW GOING. NHUT SAID THAT HE HAD PLANNED A
HELICOPTER OPERATION TO ASSIST HIS FORCES ADVANCE BUT, EVEN WITH
THEIR PROBLEMS, HIS BATTALION COMMANDERS SAID THEY WOULD RATHER GO
IN BY FOOT. NHUT CANCELLED THE CHOPPERS AND THE OPERATION CONTINUES
AT A VERY SLOW PACE. HE FEELS THAT HE MUST CLEAR BINH SON BEFORE
HE CAN MOVE ON TO OTHER TARGET AREAS. IF HE LEAVES THE VC IN
BINH SON HE FEARS THAT THEY WILL CONSOLIDATE THEIR CONTROL OF
THIS COASTAL AREA AND BE ABLE TO RECEIVE RESUPPLY BY WATER.
"THAT WOULD CAUSE US PROBLEMS LATER."

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 SAIGON 15611 01 OF 02 191003Z

6. NHUT BELIEVES THAT HE CAN CLEAR BINH SON IF HE CAN KEEP HIS
FORCES COMMITTED THERE LONG ENOUGH TO COMPLETE THEIR PRESENT
OPERATION. ONCE HE HAS BINH SON UNDER CONTROL HE HOPES TO BE
ABLE TO CONCENTRATE ON THE AREA SOUTH OF NGHIA HANH AND
PUSH THE NVA 52ND BRIGADE FURTHER AWAY FROM THE DISTRICT TOWN
TOWARD MINH LONG. (A FEW MONTHS AGO NHUT TALKED OF PERHAPS
RETAKING MINH LONG. HE IS NOT NOW TALKING OF THAT AS A REAL

POSSIBILITY.) NHUT SAID THAT THE LINE SOUTH OF NGHIA HANH IS CURRENTLY HELD BY RANGERS UNDER HIS OPCON. THE OPPOSING BATTALIONS OF THE NVA 52ND BRIGADE HAVE HALF OF THEIR FORCES ON THE LINE AND HALF IN THE REAR RETRAINING, RESTING, AND REFITTING.

7. VC LOCAL FORCES ARE CONDUCTING GUERRILLA-TYPE OPERATIONS AGAINST RF AND 2ND DIVISION FORCES IN THE SOUTHERN DISTRICTS OF MO DUC AND DUC PHO. (THE DISTRICT CHIEF OF DUC PHO HAS RECENTLY BEEN CHANGED AND THE NEW MAN IS ONE OF NHUT'S FORMER BATTALION COMMANDERS.) NHUT IS WATCHING THE SA HUYNH AREA VERY CLOSELY AND HAS ABSORBED INTO HIS AO A VERY SMALL PORTION OF MR-2 (NORTHERN TIP OF BINH DINH PROVINCE) WHICH CONTAINS APPROACH ROUTES TO THE SA HUYNH AREA. NHUT IS RELATIVELY SANGUINE ABOUT HOLDING SA HUYNH AS LONG AS THE ARVN 22ND DIVISION IN II CORPS KEEPS THE NVA 3RD DIVISION FROM LINKING WITH THE NVA 52ND BRIGADE IN A JOINT ATTACK. (NHUT'S OB MAP CARRIES AN ELEMENT OF THE NVA 3RD DIVISION IN NORTHERN BINH DINH PROVINCE WEST OF THE SA HUYNH AREA BUT HE SAYS THAT HE KNOWS VERY LITTLE ABOUT WHAT IS REALLY THERE.)

8. NHUT SAID THAT HE EXPECTED THE NVA/VC TO ATTEMPT TO KEEP THE PRESSURE ON IN MR-1 THROUGH THE RAINY SEASON BUT NOT TO ATTEMPT ANYTHING REALLY BIG UNTIL THEIR LOGISTIC ROUTES DRY OUT. HE POINTED OUT THAT "THE OTHER SIDE HAS ITS PROBLEMS TOO. THE ROADS IN THE WEST ARE WET AND VERY DIFFICULT TO USE. RESUPPLY IS DIFFICULT." HE SAID THAT HE HAD A RALLIER FROM THE NGHIA HANH AREA WHO HAD HAD TO WALK SOUTH TO THE SOUTHERN DUC PHO AREA TO BUY FOOD. THE RALLIER SAID THAT NORMAL RESUPPLY FROM THE WEST THROUGH BA TO TO THE SOUTHERN NGHIA HANH AREA WAS HAMPERED BY THE RAINS.

SECRET

NNN

SECRET

PAGE 01 SAIGON 15611 02 OF 02 190950Z

13
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /026 W
----- 110793

R 190900Z DEC 74
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1228
INFO USDEL JEC PARIS
COMUSSAG NKP THAILAND
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI
IPAC HONOLULU HI

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 SAIGON 15611

EXDIS

SPECAT EXCLUSIVE FOR MILITARY ADDRESSEES

9. NHUT DID NOT ONCE MENTION ANY RESUPPLY PROBLEMS. WHEN I ASKED HIM IF HE HAD ANY HE SAID NO. WHEN I ASKED HIM SPECIFICALLY IF HE LACKED HELMETS HE SAID NO HE HAD FOUND A "CACHE" OF BURIED US ARMY HELMETS. HE ADDED THAT LINERS WERE A BIT DIFFICULT TO COME BY. WHEN I ASKED ABOUT PONCHOS HE SAID THAT HIS DIVISION WAS SHORT 10,000. I EXPRESSED DISBELIEF POINTING OUT THAT HIS AUTHORIZED STRENGTH WAS SHORT OF 13,000. NHUT HELD HIS GROUND AND SAID THE NEW PONCHOS ARE TOO THIN AND THEY WEAR OUT AFTER A FEW MONTHS USE. THE DIVISION HAS NOT RECEIVED ADEQUATE RESUPPLY AND HIS TROOPS ARE INADEQUATELY SHELTERED FROM THE RAIN. I ASKED ABOUT PACKS. NHUT SAID THE DIVISION IS SHORT BUT HE HAS TAKEN PACKS FROM REAR SERVICE TROOPS IN ORDER TO ENSURE THAT HIS COMBAT TROOPS HAVE WHAT THEY NEED.

10. I ASKED NHUT IF HE HAD ENOUGH AMMUNITION AND RECEIVED A MINI-LECTURE ON THE PROPER USE OF AMMUNITION, PARTICULARLY ARTILLERY AMMUNITION. THE ESSENCE OF IT WAS THAT ONE SHOULD NOT FIRE UNLESS ONE HAD A GOOD TARGET. IF ONE HAD A GOOD TARGET ONE SHOULD FIRE WHAT WAS NECESSARY TO DO THE JOB. I ASKED HIM IF HE WAS CURRENTLY ABLE TO GET WHAT WAS NECESSARY TO DO THE JOB. HE SAID YES BUT ALSO POINTED OUT THAT THE
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 SAIGON 15611 02 OF 02 190950Z

INTENSITY OF FIGHTING IS HIS AO IS CURRENTLY LOW. I BELIEVE THAT HE IS A BIT MORE WORRIED ABOUT AMMUNITION ALLOCATIONS IF THE INTENSITY OF FIGHTING INCREASES.

11. I ASKED NHUT IF HE GOT ADEQUATE AIR SUPPORT. HE SAID YES BUT THEN WENT ON TO DESCRIBE A SITUATION WHEREIN BAD WEATHER AND CONFLICTING PRIORITIES (MO TAU AND 1062) COMBINED TO FREQUENTLY DENY HIM CLOSE AIR SUPPORT FOR HIS TROOPS WHEN HE MOST WANTED IT. NHUT IS ALSO AN ADVOCATE OF MORE INTERDICTION BY VNAF OF THE NVA/VC WESTERN MR-1 SUPPLY ROUTES. "IT WOULD SLOW THEM DOWN AND INTERRUPT THEIR TIMING." NHUT SAID THAT THE BOB SYSTEM WAS NOT ACCURATE ENOUGH FOR CLOSE AIR SUPPORT OF HIS TROOPS BUT PRAISED VNAF'S PILOTS AND SAID THEY WORKED WELL WITH HIS FORWARD OBSERVERS.

12. I ASKED NHUT ABOUT THE MORALE OF HIS TROOPS. HIS ANSWER: "IT IS STILL ALL RIGHT." (IN THE PAST HE HAS USUALLY CHARACTERIZED IT AS BEING "GOOD". THIS TIME HE SEEMED LESS SURE OF IT.) LIKE OTHER UNIT COMMANDERS IN MR-1, NHUT IS CONCERNED

ABOUT THE INADEQUATE FLOW OF TROOP REPLACEMENTS. HE BELIEVES, HOWEVER, THAT EVEN WITH ALL OF HIS VARIOUS PROBLEMS THE 2ND DIVISION IS STILL BEING EFFECTIVE AGAINST NVA/VC UNITS IN ITS AO. IT IS NOT, HOWEVER, AS EFFECTIVE AS HE WOULD LIKE IT TO BE.

13. NHUT POINTED OUT THAT RECENT NVA/VC ATTACKS IN WESTERN SON THINH (PARA 4 REFTTEL) ARE PROBABLY DESIGNED TO FORCE HIM TO PULL SOME OF HIS STRENGTH OUT OF THE BINH SON OPERATION. HE HAS SO FAR REFUSED TO DO SO AND HAS TOLD THE PROVINCE CHIEF OF QUANG NGAI TO COUNTER THAT THREAT WITH HIS RF RESERVE. (RECENTLY OCCUPIED POSITIONS BY THE NVA TO THE WEST OF SON TINH DISTRICT TOWN ARE WITHIN ABF RANGE OF QUANG NGAI CITY.) NHUT IS ALSO CONCERNED ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF RENEWED FIGHTING IN THE DUC DUC/QUE SON AO AND DEPENDING ON THE STRENGTH OF THE NVA/VC ATTACK HE FORESEES THE POSSIBILITY THAT HE WILL HAVE TO RETURN TO THE QUE SON AREA WITH AT LEAST ONE REGIMENT. IF HE IS REQUIRED TO DO THAT HIS OPERATION IN BINH SON WILL BE STALLED. SIGNED FRANCIS. UNQUOTE. MARTIN

SECRET

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: COMBAT OPERATIONS, COMBAT ZONES, COMBAT CASUALTIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 19 DEC 1974
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ElyME
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974SAIGON15611
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740369-0252
From: SAIGON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19741222/aaaaasoi.tel
Line Count: 241
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 74 DANANG 0729
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ElyME
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 06 MAY 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <06 MAY 2002 by boyleja>; APPROVED <26 MAR 2003 by ElyME>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTHERN MR-1
TAGS: MILI, VS
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005